

## MEMO FROM TURNER

*By: Norman Hartley*

Canada's top 100 corporations donate less than 1 per cent of their pre-tax profits to charity and they do it mainly in obsolete ways; Canadian philanthropic foundations are allowed to be far too secretive; the United Appeal is "morally deceptive".

These are the themes of a report on corporate philanthropy prepared by Memo from Turner, a private group financed by the federal Government.

Turner, as the group is known, is named not for federal Finance Minister John Turner but for a song by the Rolling Stones.

It spent several months interviewing executives of Canada's top corporations to find out how they distributed philanthropic funds. It concluded that most companies gave little and were tied to outdated ways of choosing recipients.

With the exception of six corporations, they give money without evaluating the programs they finance or taking any direct interest in them, the report says.

Bert Liffman, one of the team that prepared the report, said it shows that "most large corporations regard philanthropy as a burden rather than as a useful social tool."

The six corporations described as "good corporate citizens" with clear-cut philanthropic policies were: John Labatt Ltd., Molson Industries Ltd., MacMillan Bloedel Ltd., Gulf Oil Canada Ltd., the Ford Motor Co. of Canada Ltd. and Alcan Canada Products Ltd.

About 20 per cent of the 100 companies refused to co-operate with the survey and many others were very reluctant to explain their policies or disclose details of amounts or the criteria used to disburse funds.

The average corporate donation was 0.61 per cent of pre-tax profits, down from 0.87 per cent in 1969.

Memo from Turner, which received a \$100,000 grant from the federal Department of Health and Welfare last year, is trying to provide communications links between the more successful projects operating within the "counter-culture".

The report began as a guide to help innovative community agencies obtain funds from corporations, but it turned into a more detailed study of patterns of corporate philanthropy.

In a separate section on philanthropic foundations, the report is severely

critical of federal legislation that allows foundations to maintain almost complete secrecy about their activities.

“Even an educated guess as to the extent of foundation wealth, let alone who’s who in the world of Canada’s foundations, is exceedingly difficult,” the report says.

“The influence of the rich in philanthropy focuses on the established institutions and tends to maintain the status quo. It is rare that major donations are made to encourage basic change or even minor dislocation of any aspect of established society,” it adds, quoting a U.S. study which, it says, is equally valid for Canada.

The report is very critical of the United Appeal:

“It almost appears that corporations use their own money that would otherwise go into taxes, and the contributions of wage earners, to finance services which have great sentimental and public relations value but accomplish little in dealing with basic social problems.

“In other words, the corporate executives are receiving public recognition for themselves and their companies through a fund-raising drive that gathers money which belongs to the people anyway. While I would hesitate to call this fraud, it is certainly morally deceptive.” the report says in a special section prepared by Bill Fisher and endorsed by the other members of the team preparing the over-all report, Suzanne de Poe, Lawrence Rubin, Mr. Liffman and Don Allen.

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